



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 106th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 146

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, JULY 25, 2000

No. 98

House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. COOKSEY).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
July 25, 2000.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN COOKSEY to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 19, 1999, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 25 minutes, and each Member except the majority leader, the minority leader, and the minority whip limited to not to exceed 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 9:50 a.m.

LIVABLE COMMUNITIES AND REDUCING GUN VIOLENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, my purpose in serving in Congress is to help make our families live in livable communities, places where those families can be safe, healthy, and economically secure. An important part of that effort is reducing the toll of death and injury from gun violence.

One of my biggest disappointments of a public service career is our inability as a government to take action. Since I have been active in politics we have lost 1 million Americans to gun violence, more than all the Americans killed in every war since the Civil War. Preparing to leave this summer, the House has delayed for 1 year acting on the activities for reducing gun violence that were passed by the Senate.

We can in fact take sensible steps, as we have with other public health crises. For instance, we had faced massive carnage on our Nation's highways. Yet, for the last 30 years, as part of a larger strategy, we have cut automobile deaths in half, not by accepting the carnage but by moving forward with a safer automobile product, highway design, and attitudes towards things like drunk driving.

The same approach can work with gun violence. The American public wants it and will support it. They want to see steps to make guns safer, to keep guns out of the hands of more people with violent or criminal histories, to close the gun show loophole.

One of the most important things we need to do to urge action is to put a face on the 1 million people who have been killed. That is an effort that I have been attempting in my term of office.

Today I wanted to say a couple of words about a young man named Ray Ray Winston, who was Portland, Oregon's first victim of gang-related slaying. Some dismissed his death as something that was a logical consequence of a young man running with a tough crowd, being at the wrong place at the wrong time. Yet, Ray Ray Winston was a young man who was dealt a very tough hand by life: a father incarcerated, not having as much family support; a young man who had aspirations, for instance in athletics. He had been just a couple of weeks before his death in a basketball camp with my son.

Unfortunately, his death set off a wave of shootings. Teenagers who should have been in school instead of out in the streets were involved with retaliatory activity, the risk being accentuated by the availability of guns and the willingness to use them.

It is important, Mr. Speaker, that we make sure that Americans understand that there is a face behind each one of those statistics. Then we need to press for action, first on the local level, not just with Governors and mayors and county commissioners and housing authorities, but also supporting the activities of citizen activists.

For example, in my State of Oregon we have put an initiative on the Oregon ballot to close the gun show loophole if Congress cannot and will not act.

But there is no escaping the need to put pressure on the national level. Sadly, there is a huge difference between the political parties regarding gun violence. Sadly, the Republican leadership in the House has been an active partner with the NRA preventing us from moving forward. They have even boasted that if they were able to elect George Bush, they would be able to work right out of the White House.

But Vice President GORE and the Democratic congressional leadership would in fact enact commonsense reforms to reduce gun violence. These are steps that are supported by the American public and steps that would make a difference. When we come back in September, it will have been 13 months since the conference committee on juvenile violence has even met.

I hope the American public will add their voice to demand an end to the spineless acceptance of gun violence and enact simple, commonsense gun reforms to make our communities more livable, to make our families safe, healthy, and economically secure.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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